

KY's System of Care Academy  
Marriott Griffin Gate, Lexington  
Thursday, June 26, 2014

Over the past 6 ½ years I've had the opportunity to learn more than I ever thought I would about Kentucky. I've traveled across the Commonwealth and in every corner, every community, I've found wonderful people that strive to improve the quality of life for the people of the Commonwealth – people just like those of you here today. And in every corner there are people desperately in need of help.

I believe this need for assistance is greatest amongst those suffering from substance abuse. Alcohol and drug abuse are *everywhere* in our state – it affects the young, old, men, women, rich and poor. It knows no prejudice and heeds no boundaries.

Drug and alcohol abuse is causing untold misery among our families. As co-chair of the Recovery Kentucky Task Force, I have seen the fall-out of addiction first-hand.

Parents afraid they have lost their child to drugs – for good. Children falling into the same addictive cycles as their parents. Communities at a loss as to how to control and address the problem and fearful of drug-related violence. Governments struggling to find policy solutions and funding to stem the tide of abuse.

It is robbing our economy of productive workers.

It is filling our jails, hospitals and treatment centers.

And it is draining our state budget of resources that could be used to fund classrooms, put police on our streets and create jobs.

To be blunt, substance abuse is wasting away the future of Kentucky.

And there is nothing...nothing...more sad, more maddening, more tragic...than watching this disease take hold of our children.

We've all heard the statistics but as people in this room know, numbers don't tell us the real story.

They don't capture the pain of a parent who loses his or her child to an overdose ... the hopelessness of a teenager that has been surrounded by abuse their whole life and sees no way out... the lost potential of a young adult whose career and very life is derailed, perhaps forever.

You are here today because you want to make a difference. You work hard to lessen this problem and improve lives. The Governor and I appreciate and admire each of you: you are our first line of defense...our boots on the ground...and we want you to know that we do not expect you to fight this battle alone.

Steve has taken aggressive steps in a number of areas to address this issue:

- He created an Interstate Prescription Drug Task Force with officials from Ohio, Tennessee and West Virginia to better identify those who exploit our borders in order to abuse, misuse or divert prescription drugs.
- Established Kynect to provide healthcare to 421,000 Kentuckians. Supported the expansion of Medicaid reimbursable services for behavioral health and substance abuse treatment.

This groundbreaking effort allows for expanded access to prevention services, fundamentally changes what types of services are available to individuals with mental health and addiction disorders, enhances community-based service options and creates additional incentives to coordinate care. In short – this is HUGE for the behavioral health community.

- Testified in Washington as part of a national lobbying effort that persuaded Florida to crack down on the pill mills that were flooding Kentucky and other states with drugs.
- Allocated funding in the budget to expand Medicaid benefits for persons in need of substance abuse treatment.

- Supported and signed ground breaking legislation (HB 463) that modifies the Justice Cabinet's policy to focus on rehabilitation as opposed to just incarceration for non-violent, drug offenders.

I'm proud of these measures and of Steve's commitment to curb the drug epidemic in Kentucky. But there is always more that needs to be done if we are to combat this problem head-on.

In meeting with health care professionals, teachers, school administrators, parents, communities and government officials it became abundantly clear to me that Kentucky suffered from serious gaps in care for adolescents struggling with substance abuse.

Since we know that children with untreated mental health problems are more susceptible to substance abuse and that the earlier a child starts using drugs and alcohol the more likely they are to become addicted, it seemed logical to establish interventions where they could best help children showing early symptoms of drug and alcohol use.

Naturally, our first hurdle to overcome was a barrier we all face – money. Fortunately, we were able to address this issue with funding from two pharmaceutical settlements recovered by Attorney General Jack Conway. These monies were directed to expand substance abuse treatment services in Kentucky, with a focus on adolescent treatment.



It was most logical to implement a screening process where our children already are and with people they are comfortable with – thus, \$1 million of settlement funding was directed to establish the School-Based Behavioral Health Screening Initiative.

By training school staff to recognize these behaviors as symptoms of greater need – rather than isolated problems – they can help a student get intervention. These early measures can be the difference between a child taking the road to juvenile justice or social services or making strides towards college and career readiness.

The overall goal of the School-Based Behavioral Health Screening Initiative is to help schools recognize when a student might be showing signs of a behavioral health need, respond appropriately, and refer them to a designated school-based screener for identification of need.

We launched this program in January of this year and identified six districts to implement demonstration sites:

1. Campbell County
2. Christian County
3. Livingston County
4. Perry County
5. Shelby County
6. Whitley County

These districts were asked to select at least three schools in which staff would be identified as behavioral health screeners and to begin screening kids before the end of the school year.

To date, six districts selected 19 schools, which have had nearly 50 school-based staff complete training on the behavioral health screener (counselors, FRYSC coordinators, principals, psychologists, nurses, social workers and teachers).

This is only our first step in the rollout process. We hope that within the next two years, all schools will have trained staff who will be able to screen youth for behavioral health needs, and ensure that they are

able to access the services they to continue toward successful lives.

\$19 million of the \$32 million settlement is also being directed towards the expansion of adolescent substance abuse treatment services through a competitive grant process known as KY Kids Recovery.

Steve, by executive order, created the Substance Abuse Treatment Advisory Council (SATAC), on which I serve, to administer the grant program and oversee the distribution of settlement funds.

SATAC, along with subject matter experts, has been reviewing grant applications and is seeking to fund programs that best address geographical need and

fill gaps in the continuum of care to ensure that Kentucky's children – all of Kentucky's children – have access to quality, evidence-based treatment services that can put them on the road to recovery.

We're looking forward to rewarding these monies in the near future and providing for expanded adolescent services in communities across the Commonwealth. I know that you, more than anyone, know the need for these efforts.

Joining us today is a gentleman whose life's work is dedicated to addressing addiction problems.

Dr. Ken Winters, Ph.D. is the director of the Center for Adolescent Substance Abuse Research in Boston, a professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Minnesota and a Senior Scientist

with the Treatment Research Institute in Philadelphia.

He, like you, gets the need for a full spectrum of care for our children.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Ken Winters.

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